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RECREATION AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES.

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RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES SEEM TO BE CLOSELY INVOLVED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BOTH IN FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND IN THE ACTUAL OPPORTUNITIES POSSIBLE. CONSEQUENTLY, THE TIME IS RIPE FOR THE ORIGIN AND/OR DEVELOPMENT OF ONE OR MORE NEW AGENCIES WITH THE INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF MODERN YOUTH AS THE LEVER FOR THEIR BEGINNING. TO ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO UTILIZE THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS WHICH WOULD NECESSARILY INVOLVE THE YOUTH OF THE NATION. THROUGH THESE EFFORTS, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO RETURN TO THE SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER WHERE YOUTH NOT ONLY HAS OPPORTUNITY, BUT RESPONSIBILITY. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23-26, 1967, WASHINGTON, D. C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U. S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (ES)

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1. "I should like to attempt to correct what seems to me to be an all too common mistake, in considering as separate and distinctly different the meanings of the terms recreational and cultural activities. Implied would seem to be a reflection of the old-fashioned mores and patterns that recreational activities are apt to be athletic in types and idle time fillers while cultural activities, so called, are those that reflect status and artistic flavor. I believe this to be a dangerous division and separation weighted with social values and snobbish implications that are disastrous for society, even if perhaps reflecting an actual condition in some cases.

2. I should like to suggest that rural youth in this day and age are not that different from other youth. Certainly there are many more similarities than there are differences between rural youth and all other youth.

3. Recreational activities and opportunities these days seem increasingly to be tied up or involved with the federal government, both in the financial support available and in the actual opportunities possible. For instance, the Soil Conservation Service and other units of the Department of Agriculture provide all sorts of assistance and direction in developing rural recreation enterprises to supplement or substitute for the more average farm activities. The various education acts and the Land and Water Conservation Fund make available federal monies for all types of facilities and activities of a recreational nature and provide for many forms of cooperative action.

4. The time would seem ripe for the origin and/or development of one or more new agencies with the interests and needs of modern youth as the lever for their beginning. It is notable that in the late 1800's and early 1900's so many of our youth-serving agencies came into being. It would seem now we were in another phase of the social revolution and one in which youth is playing a dominant part. The gangs of the past (and/or present) may be the forerunners of new organizations and we should be astute enough to capitalize when the time is ripe.

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5. Certainly it is trite to once more mention that youth participation in planning is an absolute necessity, but perhaps it is worth reiterating once more. The democratic process requires citizen participation, and youth not only are the citizens of tomorrow, but by sheer numbers, if not aggressiveness, are the citizens of today. They must be involved in the planning process, though the establishments of limits and levels of responsibility doubtless will be painful.

6. I am sure it is perfectly obvious to everyone the extent to which mechanical devices and instruments have become dominant parts of recreation, from the commercial devices that periodically appear, such as the hula hoop and the skate board, to the very strong and active water-based devices, from motor boats to surf boards and all that is in between. This reflects, no doubt, not only our affluent society, but perhaps our gradual running out of space for freely chosen land activities. Certainly this has tremendous implications for rural youth, again not only as to activity for themselves, but also for employment potential.

7. Lastly, it would seem that we have somewhat come full circle from the beginnings of settlement houses and neighborhood centers through community and youth centers to the need again for the small decentralized "center of activity." It is foolhardy, no doubt, to dream that this center might again be a family center, but certainly the return to the small neighborhood center where youth not only has opportunity, but responsibility, and where their many-faceted needs can be served, from summer job placement to study hall to reading room to activity center. Bigness certainly is not the answer, as we are finding out in the schools and colleges, in the churches and in youth organizations."